

Assessing Occupational Engagement in College Student with Disabilities

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A Colorado State University study examined the impact of assistive technology on college students' performance in academics (Malcolm & Roll, 2017). The findings indicated the students felt the use of AT positively impacted their academic success and believed they would continue to use the assistive technology post-graduation. While academic performance is an important part of the college experience, as current college students, we know that there is much more to college than just going to class. Moreover, our field of occupational therapy acknowledges the value of a holistic understanding of a person's daily activities, which extend far beyond academics for college students (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2014).

Upon examining the occupations of college students with disabilities and their use of assistive technology (AT) to facilitate participation, we have noticed a gap in the literature regarding which types of occupations that college students with disabilities engage in outside of the classroom. There is a fair amount of research about academic occupations, but not about extracurricular or leisure interests. This sparked an interest in what types of extracurricular occupations other than academics do college students with disabilities engage in and what other occupations do they wish to engage in. Expanding from this, we wish to understand how AT can assist in ensuring that all occupations, one engages in as a college student are accessible, regardless of ability.

This presentation encompasses the first step of our research process, which is a review of the current literature that investigates daily activities and occupations of college students with disabilities. During this step, we identified a lack of evidence outlining the daily activities of college students, and an even greater gap in the literature highlighting the occupational engagement of college students with disabilities. Therefore, our research will begin by conducting a survey to determine what daily activities college students with disabilities participate in, including self-care, leisure, social participation, and productivity. College students with disabilities have a desire and a right to engage in the same occupations as their typically developing counterparts, and this can be achieved through the use of AT. In order to assess the AT related needs of college students with disabilities we need to begin to understand the roles they assume as college students beyond the classroom environment.

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2014). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd Ed.). American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 68(Suppl. 1), S1–S48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.682006>

Malcolm, M. P., & Roll, M. C. (2017). The impact of assistive technology services in post-secondary education for students with disabilities: Intervention outcomes, use-profiles, and user-experiences. *Assistive Technology*, 29(2), 91-98.